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01/16/79 File 40
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TELEGRAM

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FROM

CLASSIFICATION

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

12065:
E.O. 11652:
TAGS:
SUBJECT:
ACTION:GDS 8/16/85 (HALLMAN, WILLIAM H.) OR-P
SHUM AR
GOA TRIES TO LIMIT DAMAGE IN THE WAKE OF RAIDS ON
HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

BUENOS AIRES 6728

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6581, BUENOS AIRES 6648

1. SUMMARY. In the wake of raids ^{authorized by a Judge} against three

human rights organizations and yesterday's news that

"League" headquarters have been permanently closed,

Videla

it looks as though the government is embarked on a

FONMIN

"damage control mission." /Pastor sent a message today

of his concern lest the events damage U.S.-Argentine

relations -- to which the Ambassador replied that

already there were severe effects. Indicators are

that some kind of "cabal" (of which Judge Anzoategui

was a member) authored the action, leaving the govern-

ment to face the diplomatic storm and pick up the

pieces. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) Police moved yesterday (August 15) to close
and seal the office of the League for Human Rights,AMB
DCM
POL 3
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ICA
RF
CHRON

Reason

Declassify on

Date

Downgrade to

In Full

Exemption(s):

Release () Excise () Deny

Margaret P. Grafield, Director

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

DRAFTED BY:

POLCOUNS:WHHallman:jkm

DRAFTING DATE

8/16/79

TEL. EXT.

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CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY:

DCM:MChapin

CLEARANCES:

ICA:JCorr

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OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS-413)
January 1975
Dept. of State

50153-101

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following raids on that office and the offices of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights and the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights on August 10 and 14.

3. [REDACTED] This morning (August 16) Deputy Foreign Minister Cavandoli telephoned the Ambassador on behalf of Foreign Secretary Pastor (who is ill) to explain the government's case and to express concern that it might harm U.S.-Argentine relations -- especially to be avoided, Cavandoli said, just days after Pastor and the Secretary had established rapport and good mutual understanding at their meeting in Quito. The Ambassador replied that relations inevitably had been affected, and severely so.

4. [REDACTED] Cavandoli explained that there was real concern in government circles over activities of the League, which appeared to be engaged in fraudulent activities leading to problems with the visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Cavandoli claimed that there is good evidence of this. Why, the Ambassador asked was it then necessary to take on the Assembly and the Ecumenical Movement and remove files from those

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organizations. (Note: Neither the Assembly nor the Ecumenical Movement were closed.) Cavandoli said that Minister of Interior Harguindeguy would be issuing a full statement on the matter, possibly this afternoon.

5. COMMENT: The Foreign Ministry's concern and other indicators help smoke out origins of the actions taken against human rights organizations, which we believe now can be attributed to a "cabal" of hardliners operating with Judge Anzoategui, who actually ordered the investigations and confiscations. Ironically, although we have viewed the judiciary as cowed and ineffectual, it seems possible that a judge -- acting with the connivance of powerful friends in the military -- could author the events. (The Caputto case, again, comes to mind.) A reliable source told the Buenos Aires Herald (which printed the story) that the Minister of Justice has called in Judge Anzoategui for this afternoon to ask for an explanation of the matter, and that the government may intend to inform the Inter-American Commission officially that it did not order the actions.

6. Action against the human rights organizations takes place against a background of dislike in many quarters for the Commission's coming and

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and realization that only days are left before it is to arrive. We were told recently that when the visit was being discussed a year ago elements of the Foreign Ministry spoke openly of President Videla's "treachery" in making the invitation. Officers of the relatively liberal "Association of Lawyers" expressed their troubled view of the Commission's visit to an Embassy Monday, officer only/~~xxxxxx~~ and even La Prensa -- openly sympathetic to human rights concerns -- continues to disapprove the Commission's visit on grounds that it invades sovereignty and that Argentina should undertake its own self analysis. There were predictions here in the Embassy and among human rights activists that unpleasant events would occur as the visit approached -- and no one would rule out the possibility that there may be more and that they may be more unpleasant. It is moot what, specifically, perpetrators hope to accomplish.

7. What seems important to us now is that the Videla regime government appears to have waked up to what Anzoategui's judicial action set off, and to have started a damage control program.

CASTRO

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